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## Española police: Man trying to frighten prowler fatally shoots woman

By Sami Edge | [sedge@sfnewmexican.com](mailto:sedge@sfnewmexican.com) May 5, 2018



Douglas D. Smith, courtesy Rio Arriba County jail

DEFENDANT'S  
EXHIBIT

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A 36-year-old Española woman was shot and killed early Saturday morning by a man who said he was trying to scare off a suspected prowler, police said.

Española police arrested Douglas Smith, 68, Saturday on a charge of second-degree murder, accusing him of shooting and killing the woman outside his home on the property of a motel he operates on North Riverside Drive.

Smith, 68, called 911 to report the death. He told police that when he fired the shots, he had just been trying to scare off a prowler who he thought was burglarizing a camper. But instead, he hit the woman twice in the forehead, according to a criminal complaint. The woman died at the scene.

Smith was booked into the Rio Arriba County jail in Tierra Amarilla around noon Saturday, records show.

Police have not released the identify of the woman, pending notification of kin. Newly hired Española police Chief Louis Carlos, a retired captain with the Santa Fe Police Department who stepped into the job Saturday, confirmed the woman was from Española.

According to reports from the Española Police Department, Smith told officers he had been lying in bed when the alarm attached to his outdoor motion sensors went off. The alarm had gone off twice Friday night but those were false alarms. He had the system installed because he'd had problems with people sneaking into his yard before, he told police.

When the alarm sounded again, just after 1 a.m. Saturday, Smith was expecting to find raccoons that had previously entered his yard. He grabbed his jacket and the pistol he carries when he leaves the house at night, and stepped onto his porch.

This time, he spotted someone hiding in the bushes near a camper trailer that had belonged to his late mother.

Alarmed, Smith told police, he raised his .22-caliber Luger and started shooting to the left of the trailer. He saw the shadow dart to the left after the first shot, he said, and then he fired more shots in the general area “to scare off the person,” like he has done with intruders before.

Shaken by the incident, the man began to search the area. That’s when he found the woman’s body.

After the shooting, Smith’s neighbor stuck her head outside and asked what happened, according to a report. Smith told her he’d shot somebody. She told him to dial 911.

Smith called police around 1:17 a.m., a report says, and summoned them to his property behind the Western Winds Motel on North Riverside Drive.

Paramedics responded as well, a criminal complaint says, but to no avail.

Smith put his gun down, and when police arrived, he was apprehended without any issue, the complaint says.

There were four spent .22 casings on the ground, along with Smith’s Luger, with three more rounds inside. Police didn’t find any weapons or burglary tools near the woman’s body.

Smith’s brother, Daniel Smith, said Douglas Smith owns the Western Winds Motel.

Daniel Smith, who also lives on the property in a mobile home, learned of the shooting Saturday morning when he saw crime scene tape around the lot. The brothers have had multiple burglary attempts in the past, Daniel Smith said. He doesn’t agree with the murder charge his brother is facing.

“He was just protecting the property, pretty much,” Daniel Smith said. “I guess you can’t use deadly force, but he was just trying to scare them, as far as I understand.”

Douglas Smith doesn’t have a criminal history in New Mexico, according to an online



search of state court records.

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## Sami Edge

Reporter

Sami Edge covers public-safety issues for Santa Fe New Mexican and follows developments in this year's fire season.